

MAPPING FRONTIERS, PLOTTING PATHWAYS: ROUTES TO NORTH-SOUTH CO-OPERATION IN A DIVIDED ISLAND

**FINAL CONFERENCE, 19-20 JANUARY 2006,
ARMAGH CITY HOTEL, ARMAGH**

ORGANISED BY THE CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

REPORT¹

INTRODUCTION (Chaired by Andy Pollak)

The conference was opened by Sir George Quigley, Chair of the Institute for British Irish Studies, who welcomed the event as a sign of continuing efforts to improve North/South relationships. He referred to the progress made in this work since the early 1990s and that its success was tied to cooperation being practical and mutually beneficial.

The lead investigators of the Mapping Frontiers, Plotting Pathways research team (Dr John Coakley and Prof. Liam O'Dowd) then spoke about the aims of the research project to address the comparative nature of borders, the multiple impacts of the Irish border and the moves towards institutional and other forms of cross-border cooperation. The outputs of the research project – six academic workshops, four study days, two major conferences and a series of publications – were also referred to. Finally, the content of the final conference was then introduced including its various themes and parallel sessions.

SESSION 1: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

1. “Partition: definition, types, justification, criticism, explanation and assessment”, Prof. Brendan O’Leary, University of Pennsylvania.

Questions and Answers

(i) Prof Bradley: Was the “division” of Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s an example of partition?

A: Prof. O’Leary answered that this had not been the case: there had been an orderly break-up of territorial homelands and a peaceful secession of two areas, rather than a freshly cut boundary. However, he noted that these measures, driven by elite groups, had been effected without the formal approval of a majority in either area. Still, he argued that, in the interests of preventing or reducing violence, secession had been a better bet than partition.

(ii) Prof. Bradley: Were there any examples of a multi-national reversion of partition?

A: Reversion of partition was very rare and no examples of multi-national reversion worth empirical analysis existed. An exception to this rule was Poland after World War II, which was a kind of pluri-national entity restoration.

¹ Copies of the various presentations and the list of attendees can be found at <http://www.crossborder.ie/events/mfconference.php>

(iii) Dr L'Estrange: Wasn't it the case that, while a possible reversion of partition needed to be in the interests of all parties, it must also address the concepts of loyalty and, particularly, identity? Is there not a danger of ignoring nationalism as a factor in any possibilities for reunification?

A: Identities can shift, making a reversal possible. For instance, if a Catholic majority emerged and stayed in N. Ireland, some Unionists could conceivably wish to have N. Ireland dissolved to avoid majority rule by Catholics. It is also the case that nationalism is tied to partition to some degree and that to move from the current situation in Ireland would need a shift from this 'old identity'. This is the reason behind suggestions such as federal governance of the island of Ireland rather than reunification.

(iv) Dr Finlay: It was suggested that there was considerable support for the partition in Ireland amongst the "Celtic Tiger" generation in Dublin, particularly young people.

A: Prof. O'Leary accepted this analysis and felt that there was very strong backing for partition in Northern Ireland among unionists and amongst some southern nationalists who regard the development of the Irish Republic as natural unit. Also he criticised the methods of historians based in Dublin who often take the historicist view that events like partition are inevitable.

2. "Globalization, borders and differential mobilities", Prof. Josiah Heyman, University of Texas, El Paso.

Questions and Answers

(i) Prof. Bradley: Could the US create a parallel system to the EU's Schengen Information System initiative (which enables a method for preferred distribution of goods and their quick entry into the EU)?

A: As seen by Germany's policy of implementing a similar scheme in Poland, to clear Polish citizens for entry into Germany, it was clear that the likes of the Schengen Initiative was a lever to influence border policy in EU countries. The resultant feature of a system like Schengen is that it pushes the jurisdiction of a country's borders right out the airport of the country of departure which means control/stopping persons leaving their country of origin with a specific destination in mind.

(ii) Prof. O'Leary: With regard to the US/Mexico border, why was Mexican irredentism so weak?

A: There was a strong movement involving Mexican people in Texas until the defeat of the final uprising in 1861. However, after that date, Mexicans were largely voluntary migrants to the US and more concerned by the border rather than a return of Texas or New Mexico. Moreover, Mexican governments have paid little more than lip service to the question of a return of former Mexican territory now part of the USA.

(iii) Do rules on entry also apply to Canada?

A: The rules apply to Canada, where smuggling does occur. The Canadian border is an example of one where security concerns drive the agenda because of the fear of entry to the USA by terrorists across the long border and the evidence of few alleged terrorists being apprehended at the Mexican border. Ports of entry, especially airports, are a very important concern to the US government.

(iv) Is the USA reviewing the matter of passport control for entry from Canada?

A: Yes, the matter is under discussion.

(v) What is the attitude of the people of the USA to the government's border-control policy, with special consideration of civil liberties implications?

A: While civil liberties is a very big issue, US public opinion is generally quite anxious, or paranoid, about the wider world. The major concerns about civil liberty largely originate outside the USA, especially in the EU, and also in Canada/Mexico. In all three places, however, US economic muscle can be a useful lever in allaying or overcoming these concerns. Economic interests, for example the automobile industry, were also concerned that movement of goods might be slowed. Therefore pressure from these powerful, if a little unusual, sources was an important consideration for the US authorities in its border controls.

Prof. Heyman also noted that the law requiring all entries into the USA to be documented was not applied consistently to short-term journeys.

SESSION 2, THE IRISH BORDER: ECONOMIC AND CIVIL SOCIETY DIMENSIONS

Parallel Session 2A: Economic Dimensions (Chair: Eoin Magennis)

"An Island Economy or Island Economies?", Prof. John Bradley, Economic and Social Research Institute

Did (and Does) the Border Matter?", Profs, Cormac Ó Gradá and Brendan Walsh, University College, Dublin

Questions and Answers

(i) Mr Gough asked whether the 'all-island dimension', as promoted by InterTradelreland would not create the circumstances for a less gloomy outlook for the Northern economy than presented in the first paper?

A. Prof. Bradley agreed that the work of InterTradelreland was important in encouraging all-island collaboration but he felt that the business culture of the North was such that, with some exceptions, the gains to the North would be much less than hoped for.

(ii) Prof. O'Leary commented that the economic impacts of partition should not be underestimated and therefore the gains from cooperation might indeed be greater than imagined.

(iii) Mr McEnroe asked whether the migration patterns in the second paper took account of cross-border mobility for work purposes?

A. Prof Ó Gradá said that the data came from census information rather than the more dynamic information that might be got from other labour market statistics.

(iv) Mr McDevitt commented that at a recent speech in Derry, the Irish Finance Minister Brian Cowen had made the point that cooperation on inward investment would pay dividends for both sides of the Border and for some of the cross-border regions such as the North West.

(v) Dr Farren also argued in favour of greater cooperation in order to kick-start the Northern economy and cited areas such as skills development and infrastructure planning as possible areas of greater collaboration.

(vi) Mr Stewart argued that Ireland, North and South, needed to worry about the global economic threats posed by economies further East and had to ask whether either could prosper without greater cooperation.

(vii) Sir George Quigley returned to the idea of the 'island economy' which he and others had first raised in the early 1990s. He made the point that at that time the relative positions of North and South were not as they are now and that cooperation might have happened on a more level playing field. He still believed that that this could happen even with the divergence in performance between the two economies identified in the two papers.

Parallel Session 2B: Civil Society across the Border (Chair: John Coakley)

"Living on the Border: spatial behaviour and political attitudes in Irish Border communities, North and South, Catholic and Protestant", Prof. James Anderson, Queen's University Belfast.

"Continuity and change in a partitioned civil society: Whyte revisited", Dr Kevin Howard, Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Questions and Answers

(i) A member of the audience noted that the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) covered the Republic only while its counterpart in N. Ireland became part of the UK-wide NSPCC.

(ii) Dr Finlay: In respect of organisations that were originally all-Ireland, which "side" tended to break away to form its own governing body?

A: Dr Howard noted, as a generalisation, it was the south that initiated split. In this process, political privilege and patronage played an important role.

(iii) Prof. Heyman: Was it the case that an organisation's domain tended to be influenced by state jurisdiction, particularly for institutions that are very territorially focused?

A: Dr Howard indicated that his research indicated a definite pattern along those lines. One method of transcending the Border was the adoption of a federal structure based on the provinces. An example of this was angling, officially an all-Ireland body but with strong federal governing structures as a compromise.

(iv) A member of the audience asked if attitudinal surveys to the Border amongst organisations had been carried out prior to the project research?

A: Prof. Anderson replied that this was not his direct area of research but that it was possible that information of this nature could be obtained from surveys conducted by the likes of the *N. Ireland Life and Times Survey*.

(v) How much do funding arrangements affect the allegiance of voluntary organisations?

A: Dr Howard said that this was not something that had been researched.

SESSION 3: CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Parallel Session 3A, Borders and Mobilities in the North West Region (Chair: Eoin Magennis)

“Competition, contention and crime: Newspapers’ portrayal of the Border in the North West region”, Dr Katy Hayward, Institute for British Irish Studies

“Daily worker mobility in Ireland, North and South: Cross-border movements in context”, Dr Ian Shuttleworth, Queen’s University, Belfast

Questions and Answers

(i) Prof. Bradley commented that provincial newspapers exist in the South and he gave the example of the slant of media reporting which pertains to a particular region only. When Mary Robinson visited Inishbofin, she stopped in at Clare Island on her return and a local Mayo newspaper had the headline ‘Mary Robison visits Clare Island’, omitting the fact that the purpose of her trip was to Inishbofin, as it is part of Galway. He asked whether the Londonderry Sentinel reported on community tension which would not be mentioned in the national papers?

A: Katy Hayward said that there is intense and detailed coverage of community conflict for example the Londonderry Sentinel features stories relating to the Fountain area of Derry.

(ii) Prof. Bradley asked whether the second paper touched on socio-economic and geographical issues which are just as relevant to Cork/Limerick as the Border.

A: Ian Shuttleworth replied that there remained a lack of data on peoples’ movement/travel to jobs elsewhere and that his study encompassed the Border area only.

(iii) Mr Pollak asked whether in the example of Xerox, people were employed from all over Northern Ireland and was there any reason to suspect that less than might be expected from across the border worked there due to sectarian reasons?

A. Ian Shuttleworth answered that the HR department of Xerox did say they had less applications from across the border than would have been expected and that there was possibly a sectarian aspect to that.

(iv) Dr Clarke asked whether the second speaker felt that a good package could be put together to appeal to employees who traverse the border to work to combine the

best aspects of social welfare and tax benefits from both sides of the border? She wondered if this has this not been addressed yet by Border recruitment agencies?

A: Ian Shuttleworth answered that he was not aware of any recruitment package of this nature.

(v) Dr Clarke asked whether Dr Hayward had found any evidence for an audience currently using web-based media more?

A: Katy Hayward pointed out that while the web is used in some homes with computers it isn't widespread and thus an audience remains for local newspapers.

Parallel Session 3B, Cultural Dimensions (Chair: Cathal McCall)

"Ethnicity and the state: the institutionalisation of borders and the fluidity of identification", Dr Jennifer Todd, Institute for British Irish Studies, University College Dublin.

"Fuzzy frontiers: borders of mobility and solidity", Prof. Hastings Donnan, Queen's University Belfast.

Questions and Answers

(i) It was pointed out that in the largely Protestant communities of Markethill and Newtownhamilton, new plush houses were being built and the state schools were well attended by Protestant children. It was also the case that not all newcomers to the area had joined the Orange Order, and more cross-community contacts were emerging, in contrast to other areas of South Armagh. Mightn't this be evidence that "ethnic cleansing" did not exist in that particular part of the county?

A: Prof. Donnan agreed that, while further examination was needed, the facts as stated were true. None the less, it was equally true that there had been a certain degree of movement of Protestants out of areas close to the Border to places they considered safer, like Markethill.

(ii) Did local sectarian politics, which means different things to Protestants and Catholics, encourage the use of the "worst-case scenario" as typical of that part of the country?

A: The worst-case scenario was not always used in responses from local people. Nevertheless, surveys indicate that people continued to be affected by the Kingsmills massacre, indicating its emblematic importance in a local context far removed from Protestant metropolitan strength.

(iii) Does the Border possess any substantial influence over local relations?

A: Cross-border traffic does make a difference to perceptions or consciousness.

(iv) Is it true that Protestants in the North find it easier to deal with Catholics in the South rather than with Northern Catholics?

A: Prof. Donnan conceded that he had heard this suggestion before.

(v) One participant commented on the research methodology employed and noted that it was characteristic of the social sciences to display a bias towards the concept of “flexibility” or “fluidity”.

FRIDAY 20TH JANUARY

SESSION 4: THE LOGIC OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION (Chair: Peter Smyth)

“Inter-jurisdictional Co-operation”, Mr John Driscoll, International Centre for Local and Regional Development.

“The Belfast Agreement and cross-border economic cooperation in the tourism industry”, Dr Joan Henderson and Prof. Paul Teague, Queen's University Belfast

Questions and Answers

(i) In welcoming both papers, the Chair commented that logic was not always a strong enough factor in getting things moved forward!

(ii) Mr Pollak asked that with consideration of voluntary regional co-operation, what lessons were transferable to cross-border jurisdictions in Ireland?

A: John Driscoll answered that in the US, the set-up, which was often ad hoc and driven by need, was more conducive to voluntary co-operation. EU control (subsidiarity) and two higher jurisdictions can create a framework for more local co-operation/governance on functional needs/relationships.

(iii) It was noted that there was considerable decentralisation in the USA, which was very good for local co-operation. However, in Ireland, North and South, centralisation was very strong and with governments generally pursuing a policy of consolidation, local co-operation almost needed a form of compulsion.

(iv) Dr Clarke asked whether it was the case, even in the USA, that co-operation can be high when funds are being sought but that it diminishes once this goal has been achieved?

A: John Driscoll agreed that grant-orientated incentives need sustainability beyond the stage of money being paid out. This means that voluntary organisations often re-invent themselves. In Ireland, there is a clear need for cross-border groups to extend their co-operation.

(v) Tony Kennedy noted that there was a feeling of an absence of vision or co-ordination in the framework for Strand II of the Good Friday Agreement, for instance the absence of an economic rationale to cross-border co-operation.

(vi) Is it possible that the All-Ireland Tourism Programme might create a zero-sum outcome in the eyes of Southern representatives?

A: Dr Henderson accepted that worries over loss of business to the North might make this possible.

(vii) Does Tourism Ireland's limited mandate disrupt its ability to effect real changes in the area of all-island tourism?

A: Joan Henderson agreed that questions existed as to the power or authority of Tourism Ireland in this matter, where interventions were seen as too low-risk. Its mandate would have to be modified if policy was to change substantially.

(viii) Mr Pollak noted, with reference to the undynamic economy in the North, that an all-island tourism policy suffered from tourism in the North being publicly driven while the impetus in the South came from the private sector.

A: Joan Henderson answered that dynamics were crucial to the tourism sector. The market concentration effect in tourism was not sufficiently advanced as to be able to reduce costs. It was also noted that the N. Ireland Tourist Board was a public body that was expected to act entrepreneurially.

SESSION 5: TRANSCENDING THE BORDER

Parallel Session 5A: Institutional Co-operation (Chair: Peter Smyth)

"The operation of the North-South implementation bodies", Prof. John Coakley, Institute for British Irish Studies, University College Dublin, Mr Robin Wilson, Democratic Dialogue, Mr Brian Ó Caoidealbháin, Institute for British Irish Studies, University College Dublin.

Questions and Answers

(i) The chair observed that a former minister in the Executive had commented to him that a smaller number of implementation bodies, perhaps two, with real power, might have produced better results. Before the suspension of the Assembly, moves were underway to see if the remit of these bodies could be expanded. A possible motivation for Unionist politicians to follow this course was that by bringing more areas into the ambit of the implementation bodies, they could exercise more control over them.

(ii) Does the composition of the staff of the implementation agencies reflect a recommendatory role?

A: This was not easy to know but making recommendations was not a priority function of these bodies. However, should staff be moved around the country this could create a degree of all-island thinking.

(iii) Did the panel think that any of the existing bodies might become sacrificial lambs in a restored assembly?

A: A new assembly might engage in a sectarian carve-up and seek to lessen the role of the North-South bodies. The DUP was not opposed to North-South co-operation per se but was very focused on ensuring value for money and making them more accountable to the Executive. Therefore it was possible that some of the current structure could go to the wall.

(iv) A member of the audience noted the need for the creation of a new body, perhaps "Energy Ireland", although this would have to be constructed through existing structures.

(v) One participant considered that insufficient emphasis was placed on the concept of “reconciliation”.

A: In response, while it was agreed that it was important to create a “happiness” or “feel-good” factor, North-South co-operation was concerned much with facilitation and the removal of obstacles.

It was argued that practical cross-border interactions were not incompatible with the idea of reconciliation. By making people task orientated, reducing stereotypes and building new relationships, reconciliation could emerge. This has been the case to date with North-South relationships but less so within the North.

(vi) In observing that a relaunched North-South structures would need an input from an East-West relationship/axis, a member of the audience asked about the performance of those bodies created under Strand III of the Agreement.

A: The short answer to this question was that the British-Irish Council never met! Neither the British government nor the UUP had any interest in it.

It was further noted that an East-West axis could dilute the North-South (by extension, the Protestant-Catholic) focus of the Agreement.

Prof. Coakley commented that the Agreement had indeed facilitated co-operation in certain areas but had specifically excluded certain areas from its remit. Many felt that co-operation was actually better in areas not covered by the Agreement.

Sir George Quigley observed that the East-West axis had a very important role to play in examining the questions of tax rates in both jurisdictions. This was the key to lifting his idea of an “All-Ireland Economy” to a new dimension. To do so would require the standardisation of corporation tax rates on both sides of the Border.

(vii) Did the panel agree that North-South co-operation was now quite absent from the activities of the Civil Service in the North, having been relegated well down the list of that organisation’s priorities?

A: It was felt that there was a need for both governments to investigate this matter specifically.

Parallel Session 5B: Mapping cooperation and case studies (Chair: Patricia Clarke)

“Some findings from a mapping study of funded cross-border cooperation activities since the 1980s”, Dr Eoin Magennis, Centre for Cross Border Studies

“Sustainability: The evidence from cross-border case studies”, Prof. Liam O’Dowd, Dr Cathal McCall, Mr Ivo Damkat, Queen’s University, Belfast

Questions and Answers

(i) A question from the audience asked if there are there any case studies which show what cooperation should or should not be continued?

A. Liam O'Dowd answered that there was little evidence of sustainability being thought out or what its merits or otherwise are.

(ii) Mr McDevitt asked whether projects work better if the politicians are left out of it and was there any sense that the suspension of the Assembly and Executive in Northern Ireland impacted on the slowing down of confidence in cross-border cooperation?

A. Liam O'Dowd said that yes, the research results show that the suspension had a chilling effect. In terms of politicians being left out to make for smooth running, the answer seemed to be yes, except for the all-Ireland energy market which is run with strong government intervention.

(iii) Prof. Donnan asked about the factors that influence sustainability and if there are any other than funding?

A. Liam O'Dowd argued that the administrative framework is crucial, as was a grassroots approach where local politicians are emphasised.

(iv) Prof. Anderson asked whether behind the idea of creating a cross-border political community there was any evidence that this community will last?

A. Eoin Magennis answered that projects worked in various ways. Some projects are ephemeral – the work has a timeline and then its over. Other involved a development of networks. Some of these are well-embedded, based on trust that has been fostered and will sustain itself. However, the depth of their impact on the greater community is doubtful as there is a certain amount of replication – in other words it's the same people all the time, same faces and not spreading to a wider community.

SESSION 6: ROUND-TABLE – LOOKING FORWARD

Comments from the Project's Advisory Group

(i) Dr Peter Smyth

Dr Smyth spoke of the great logic that underpins cross-border co-operation (for example in economic development). Yet the terminology used to describe the process of partition is very stark, with references to cuts, butchery and triage, indicates that history is used to reinforce senses of identity and means that there is a considerable human dimension to economic development! He suggested that it's not easy to develop cerebral solutions to visceral questions.

(ii) Dame Joan Harbison

Dame Harbison voiced her support for the idea that contact was a precursor to reconciliation. Good structures and functionality are important but the process is as much about people, including those who work in cross-border bodies. Attitudes and aspirations need to be addressed. However, a substantial degree of pragmatism exists in the North-South bodies and this has led to their developing as they have done to date. This then raises the question of how each body contributes to the overall aim? Is there a collective examination of the best way forward? The synergies of workers in the various North-South bodies should be used to create a shared vision.

She also noted that the North-South bodies needed to communicate their work better. They are not the agenda of one particular pressure group. The East-West, EU and global dimensions are also important in cross-border co-operation.

(iii) Mr Wally Kirwan

Mr Kirwan considered that people had moved on from the time of the Partition of Ireland in the early 1920s and indeed from the scenario of a possible repartition in 1975. The Good Friday Agreement was a political accommodation; therefore Strand II needs to be seen in that context. For instance, neither economic development nor reconciliation was foremost in the minds of those who created the Agreement and received insufficient focus. He agreed that it was important to follow up on the work done by the North-South bodies. Strand II was very much affected by contentious issues, particularly those of a military/political nature (e.g. decommissioning). When the Assembly works, Strand II invariably works well too and confidence is built.

He felt that more could be done to ensure sharing of resources for both parts of the island of Ireland but that Ireland lagged far behind the US in that regard.

Patrick McWilliams, Queen's University Belfast
Eoin Magennis, Centre for Cross Border Studies
Susan Muldoon, Institute for British-Irish Studies